

Press Release

Contributed by Admin
Monday, 30 March 2015

Greater Threat To Democracy Emerging – Tissa Attanayake During presidential election campaign many promises were made to the people. Among these was the promise to abolish the executive presidency. The people expected them to keep their promise and did not expect them to just dilute the powers of the executive presidency nor did they want an executive prime minister instead. But by now there is a huge debate regarding the government's actions. Secondly they promised the people to reduce the jumbo cabinet of the previous regime, alleging that a huge amount of funds were spent on maintaining such a large cabinet. The people believed in them when they promised to reduce the cabinet to just 25. The people thought that since it was a collective government, they would keep to their word and deliver on their promises.

However former Health Minister Tissa Attanayake says the public are disgruntled and disappointed with the current regime and refuse to believe any more of their lies. In an interview with The Sunday Leader, Attanayake said that according to a statement made by cabinet spokesman Rajitha Senarathne, within the next few weeks the cabinet would exceed 100. This he said is definitely a burden on the government and the public are disappointed with the government for failing to keep to their key promises. He also accused the Government of aimlessly chugging along without an objective and with the sole intention of holding onto power.

Following are excerpts of the interview:

Q:
There are allegations of dictatorial governance of the previous regime that led to the people wanting a change. But now there are also allegations of the same methods being used by the current regime but in a different manner. What is your view on this?

A: Yes
certainly there are many instances where the present government has failed to upkeep their original pledges and the people do not see the kind of change that was promised. Slowly family bandism is gradually raising its ugly head. The faith the people had in democratic rule and good governance is slowly but surely diminishing. The people's resentment of the previous regime's presidency is gradually resurfacing with the current regime as well. This rule is also dictatorial in every sense.

Hence they cannot hoodwink the people with these minor adjustments and cunning moves, but what the people wanted was a true and decisive change in the country. They expected an atmosphere where corruption and fraud would not be heard of again. But what have got so far is totally the opposite.

Q:

There were many faults of the previous regime which former president Mahinda Rajapaksa too acknowledges. Why were these mistakes not addressed earlier?

A: Well this government was

elected in order to correct the corruption and fraud that were being allegedly committed by the previous regime. The current regime even blatantly revealed these perpetrators by name. However in spite of making such a big hue and cry about it all, so far nothing has been done against any of these offenders and instead what has happened is that they have been taken onboard. They made a big din about drugs but it is pathetic that this same regime could not even safeguard the investigation report of Wele Suda.

Sadly the law

has not been enforced against any of the perpetrators that this regime pointed fingers at. It is a well-known fact that there were many mistakes and discrepancies of the previous regime, especially during the latter stages of their rule. Even President Rajapaksa vowed to change the system that his government was running on in order to discourage corruption. That is because he too admitted and realised that there were many mistakes within his government. Hence while the ruling party and the opposition was talking so much about corruption and fraud, but the danger now is that an even greater threat to democracy is emerging.

The Central bank issue is a good example.

Q:

Now that many of the offending former politicians are within the present government, do you think that they will be prosecuted for any of their former misdeeds?

A: I certainly doubt

it. The reason being it is highly suspicious where on the one hand they are accusing these politicians but they are using them on the other hand just to satisfy their greed for power and hold onto the chance that they have got, only by cheating the people. The new government claims that in spite of these errant politicians being given positions in the new government, they will still be prosecuted. This is a big joke and

another attempt at hoodwinking the people and taking them for fools. These are all stories being spun to take the people for a ride and nothing more. Believe me this government will do nothing to bring these culprits to justice and are only interested in holding onto power. They don't care who they use in order to achieve their objectives.

Q: Although the government said they would call for a general election, do you see such a move being made?

A. There is a lot of debate on this issue. On the 8th of January the people only voted to appoint a new president and not to set up a new government. According to our constitution we have elected a new president, and he has the right to invite other parties in order to make up the majority. It was under these circumstances that the president invited Ranil Wickremesinghe to join him. However I don't see that majority under Wickremesinghe. Hence I see a huge issue here in terms of the constitution. This could be the only country that has a government with such disproportionate numbers. The majority in parliament is still with the UPFA but after President Sirisena was elected as the head of the UPFA, we see the SLFP being subjected to a certain level of control. This government is functioning depending on that control of the SLFP members. But this cannot be maintained on the long run and this is only a temporary decision taken based on certain clauses of the constitution. Hence it is my view that the constitution has been mutilated by the present government in order to cling onto this chance that they have stumbled upon.

Next, they also vowed to hold an election in April, and they have a right to do so. But today what I see is that this government has no intention of going for an election and that is why they have formed a national government with the help of several SLFP members. According to my information the president has assured the SLFP that there will not be an election right now.

If this situation is to be rectified and democracy upheld then a general election must be called. If not they should resolve the matter of majority in parliament. I am amazed at how the governing party and the SLFP are all in cahoots for greed of power.

Q: Why do you think the government is not calling for a general election?

A: Based

on my political experience I see that president Sirisena was elected as the president based on the UNP vote base and their support. Hence as a measure of gratitude he has allowed a Ranil Wickremesinghe led government even though it is in violation of the constitution. However, the PM said in parliament recently that he was willing to accept the government and the opposition if required. Although this was said in a lighter vein as a joke, it is evident now that is exactly what he has done. Therefore I see that Ranil Wickremesinghe is on a cunning political path in order to prevent Rajapaksa from coming into politics and holding onto power.

But as the leader of the SLFP President Sirisena has an obligation to the party and at the next parliamentary elections to ensure their victory. They can run on patchwork, but President Sirisena will have to prove himself and the people are watching. The people are still very much in favour of President Rajapaksa at the grass roots level and hence they cannot suppress the people for long. It is up to president Sirisena to hold the SLFP together and deliver on his promises to the people